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The Syntax of Negative Imperatives in Standard Arabic

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Abstract: ***This study is about the morphological and syntactic interaction of Standard Arabic negative particles with the imperative verbal form. The analysis is conducted within the framework of Chomsky's (1995) Minimalist Program as developed by subsequent literature. Previous analyses assume that there is a morphological asymmetry between positive imperatives and negative imperatives in SA. This asymmetry is witnessed in the absence of person agreement in the former and its obligatory presence in the latter. However, a close consideration of the use of the imperative reveals that this view is based on a misinterpretation of data under investigation. In other words, the absence of person agreement in positive imperative is a morpho-syntactic due to the inherent nature of the positive imperative form whereas its presence in negative imperative does not reflect that this morpheme expresses negative imperative. The presented analysis is based on a proposed classification of SA and Berber Negation elements into two types: inflected Negs (for tense and/or agreement) and the non-inflected ones. These two types also differ in the way they interact with the verbal morphology including Tense Aspect and Mood. The negative imperative is expressed by the prohibitive laa in conjunction with a verb in the imperfective form.***

Keywords: Minimalist Program, (non)-Inflected Negation Particles**,** Imperative, Person Agreement, (a)-symmetry

1. Introduction

This paper investigates into the syntax of negation and its interaction with the imperative verbal form in SA. The analysis is conducted within the framework of Chomsky's (1995) Minimalist Program as developed by subsequent literature. Previous analyses (Ouhalla 1993, Boukhris 1998, Benmamoun 2000), assume that there is a morphological asymmetry between positive imperatives and negative imperatives in SA. This asymmetry is revealed in the absence of person agreement in the former and its obligatory presence in the latter. However, a closer consideration of the imperative use shows that this assumption is based on a misinterpretation of the data. Thus, contra previous analyses, the hypothesis defended in this paper on the basis of data from both SA and Berber is that there are salient symmetrical properties exhibited by the morphology of the imperative and the negative imperative, which necessitate a similar syntactic treatment.

This paper is organised as follows: it consists of three main sections, excluding the introduction and the conclusion. The first section is a succinct presentation of the way SA and Berber negation elements interact with the imperative. The second section includes a discussion of the issues and theoretical implications that emerge from the presented data, especially with respect to their feature structure and representation. The third section analyses the way SA Negation particles interact with the illocutionary force of the verbal predicate, specifically the Imperative.

1.1 Negation and Imperative

This section includes four subsections. The first one is a succinct presentation of the way SA and Berber negation elements interact with the imperative. The second one is about the ddistributional differences between *laa* and *maa*. The third subsection is about the interaction of SA negation elements with the illocutionary force of the verbal predicate. The last subsection discusses the interaction of SA Negation elements and Aspect.

1.1.1 The issue

In this section, we present the way SA and Berber negation elements interact with the imperative. Arabic expresses negative imperative (=prohibition) by the prohibitive *laa*. Berber uses the Neg element *ur* in conjunction with a verb in the imperfective form.

1/ *laa* **ta-** ktub- ø — Standard Arabic
Neg you-write-juss
"Don't write!"

2/ ad *ur* **t-** g^w n-t — Berber
that Neg you-sleep(Aorist)
"Do not sleep"

The negative imperative –i.e. prohibition- as expressed in (1 and 2) is usually compared in literature to what is called positive imperative. The comparison reveals a clear asymmetry between the two which is overtly expressed by the absence of person agreement in the former (3-a &4-a) and its obligatory presence in the latter (3-b) and (4-b):

3- a/ ?uktub- ø — Standard Arabic
write- juss
"write!"
b/ *laa* **ta-** ktub- ø
Neg you-write-juss
"Don't write!"

4- a/ g^w n — Berber
sleep-you(sing)
"sleep"
b/ ad *ur* **t-** g^w n-t
that Neg you-sleep(Aorist)
"do not sleep"

However, a closer consideration of the use of the imperative reveals that the above assumption is based on a misinterpretation of the data under investigation. Therefore, the hypothesis defended in this paper is the following:

The asymmetry existing between positive imperatives and negative imperatives can be accounted for on the basis of the morphological and distributional distinctions existing between SA negation elements. In this paper we assume that SA Negs can be divided into two types which differ in various aspects -including the way they interact with the imperative.

1.1.2 Distributional Differences between *laa* and *maa*

When we consider the distributional properties of *laa* in comparison with *maa*, the following observations emerge:

9/ (a) *maa* occurs in VSO & SVO structures, as illustrated in (11).
(b) *laa* occurs only in VSO structures, as in (12).

10/(a) *maa* occurs in verbless sentences, as in (13-a).
(b) *laa* does not occur in verbless sentences, as in (13-b).

The constructions below illustrate the statements above.

11-a/ *maa* ?anšada Zayd-un šiçr-an
Neg recited Zayd-nom poetry-acc
"Zayd did not recite any poetry"
b/ *maa* Zayd-un ?anšada šiçr-an
Neg Zayd-nom recited poetry-acc.
"It is not Zayd who recited poetry"

12-a/ *laa* yunšidu Zayd-un šiçr-an
Neg recites Zayd-nom poetry-acc
"Zayd does/is not reciting poetry"
b/ **Laa* Zayd-un yunšidu šiçr-an
Neg Zayd-nom recites poetry-acc

13-a/ *maa* Zayd-un šaaçir-un
Neg Zayd-nom poet-nom
"Zayd is not a poet"
b/ **Laa* Zayd-un šaaçir-un
Neg Zayd-nom poet-nom

The following chart sums up the above observations:

Figure 1: The distribution of laa and maa in SA.

Neg	VSO	SVO	Verbless Constructions
maa	+	+	+
laa	+	-	-

1.2 *laa*/*maa* and the illocutionary force of the verb

First, there is a strong incompatibility between the occurrence of the imperative verbal form "*?ifçal*" and the negation elements *laa* and *maa*, as illustrated below.

5/ **maa* ?i lçab l- kurat-a
Neg (you)play the-ball- acc
"Do not play football"

6-a/**laa* ?ilçab maça n-numuuri
not play(you) with the-tigers
b/**lam* ?ilçab maça n-numuuri
not play(you) with the-tigers
c/**lan* ?ilçab maça n-numuuri
not play(you) with the-tigers

Second, negative imperative (prohibition) is only expressed by *laa* in conjunction with the imperfective verbal form, as illustrated in (7)

7/ *Laa* tadrib-ø ?akhaa- ka
Neg beat-juss brother-your
"Don't beat your brother"

maa, on the contrary, cannot be used to express negative imperative, as is shown in (8).

8/ **maa* ta- ktub risaalat-an
Neg you-write letter-acc

The observation made above reveal that there are salient morphological and syntactic differences between the Neg element *laa* and its counterpart *maa*. This remark is further confirmed by the distributional and selectional properties of these Negs.

1.3 SA Negation Elements and Aspect

Another property which favours the distinction between inflected and non-inflected Negs is related to the interaction of SA Neg elements with the aspectual forms of the verb, two main observations are in order:

14/ (a) *laa* is compatible with verbs in the imperfective aspectual form but they are incompatible with the perfective, as illustrated in (7).
(b) *maa* is compatible with verbs having both an imperfective and a perfective aspectual form, as illustrated in (16).

The constructions below illustrate the points.

15-a/ *laa* yunšidu Zayd-un šiçr-an
Neg recites(imperf) Zayd-nom poetry-acc
b/**laa* ?anšada Zayd-un šiçr-an
Neg recited(perf) Zayd-nom poetry-acc

16-a/ *maa* yunšidu Zayd-un šiçr-an
Neg recites(imperf) Zayd-nom poetry-acc
b/ *maa* ?anšada Zayd-un šiçr-an
Neg recited(perf) Zayd-nom poetry-acc

The following chart sums up the above observations:

Figure 2: SA Negs interaction with Aspect.

	perfective	imperfective
maa	+	+
laa	-	+

2. Implications and Assumptions

The asymmetric behaviour of the inflected *laa* versus the non-inflected Neg *maa* reveals that their treatment must be different. In this paper, we claim that the key to understanding the derivational properties of SA Negs with respect to imperative verbal forms involves an analysis of their feature structure and their representation.

2.1 Feature Structure of Negs

Concerning their feature structure, current literature associates SA negation elements with one single categorial feature either [+V] or [+D]. However, empirical data reveal

that the richness of the negation system in SA requires an inventory of features comprising more than one single feature.

The statements in (14) reveal that inflected Negs significantly interact with verbal morphology. This is further emphasised by the fact that they are sensitive to a particular verbal form inflected for a specific "verbal-case mark", as illustrated below:

16-a/ *lan* yafuuz-**a** (*****yafuuz-**u**/*****yafuuz-**ø**)
Neg win[acc] (*win[nom]/*win[juss])
"zayd will not win"
b/ *lam* yafuuz-**ø** (*****yafuuz-**u**/*****yafuuz-**a**)
Neg win[juss] (*win[nom]/*win[acc])
"zayd did not win"

The fact that no element is allowed to intervene between the Neg element and the verb implies that inflected Negs and verbal morphology do form an opaque complex. It is reasonable to think that this complex comprises only the members of a verbal chain. This is why no external element is allowed to break their opacity.

These strong morphological dependencies must somehow be encoded in the feature structure of SA Negs. In other words, features associated with inflected Negs must be of a verbal nature and must closely be related to the aspectual form of the verb. For these reasons we posit that inflected SA negation elements are invariably associated with a verbal feature and an imperfective feature. In other words, the feature matrices of inflected SA Negs are as follows: [+V, +imperf]. This feature structure is further supported by the distinct behaviour of these two types of Negs with negative imperative, as explained above. More clearly, this proposal will help provide an adequate account for the reason why the Neg element *laa* occurs with the imperative contrary to *maa*.

Related to this remark is the statements in (6), which further supports the idea that there is an intrinsic difference between inflected and non-inflected Negs with respect to their feature structure and representation. The fact that structures such as (4-b) converge after the insertion of a copular verb reinforces this idea.

17/ *Lam* yakun Zayd-un šaaçir-an
Neg was Zayd-nom poet-acc
"Zayd was not a poet"

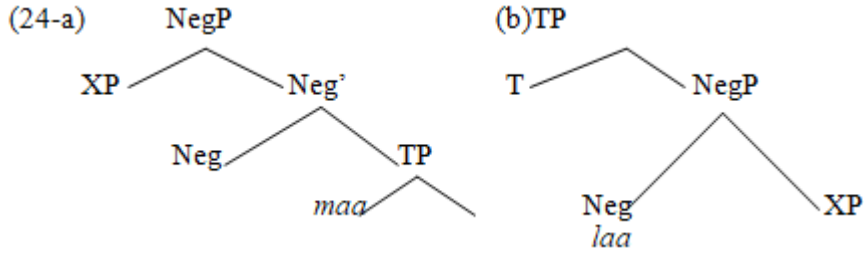
On the assumption that verbless constructions have a fully fledged inflection, it can be postulated that inflected Negs can be adjoined to T if it is paired with a visible copula, whereas the non-inflected Neg *maa* does not observe this condition. Assuming that copula visibility in verbless constructions is conditioned by specific tenses, it is reasonable to think that in these constructions negation element licensing is related to the effect of the conditions under which the copula is licensed in verbless constructions. In this paper, we assume that these conditions cannot be reduced to the difference between the present and the past tense feature structure as has been argued for by some linguists[1], but to a difference in diacritic features (strong vs. weak) associated with both Tense and Neg.

2.1 Representation

Concerning its representation, it is generally claimed in the literature that Negation element heads its own projection (see Pollock 1989, Ouhalla 1990, and Zanuttini 1991). This analysis has been extended to SA by other authors, (see for instance Benmamoun 1991-1992, F.Fehri 1993, Makhoukh 1994, Souàli 1996, Naji 1997, and Khairi 1998). In these studies certain points are focused upon, for instance: (a) the head status of Neg, (b) the structural position of Neg with respect to other functional projections, especially TP. All these authors agree on the first point (i.e. Neg. in SA does display typical head properties like blocking V-movement and interacting with other attested heads like Tense), but there is disagreement concerning the structural position of Negs.

In this paper, we assume that SA Negs differ as to the hierarchical position they occupy in structural representations. Non-inflected Negs do not interact with verbal morphology as indicated by the statements in (1-a), (2-a), and (6-b), therefore, NegP in SA must occupy two asymmetric positions reflecting the asymmetry exhibited by the inflected and the non-inflected Negs. In other words, *maa* heads a NegP above TP . Asymmetrically, *laa* heads a NegP lower than T .

[1]- cf. Benmamoun (2000) for instance.



3. The Syntax of the Imperative in SA and Berber

In this section, we will demonstrate that negative imperative constructions involve a V-to-C movement in overt syntax. This movement operation is motivated by the need to check a strong imperative feature which we consider to be associated with C.

3.1 Imperative Expressing Strategies

Both SA and Berber make use of two strategies to express the imperative. First, they use the imperative morphology on the verb. More clearly, they make use of a specific vocalic melody, as in (52-a & 53-a). Second, they use imperative particles for this purpose. "*li"* for SA (52-b) and *ar* for positive imperative in Berber[2] (53-b)

52-a/ ʔuxruj- ø Standard Arabic
go out- juss
"Go out!"
b/ li- ta- xruj- ø
that-you-go out-juss
"Go out!"

53-a/ gʷn Berber
sleep-you(sing)
"Sleep!"
b/ ar t- ggʷn-t
that you-sleep(imprf)
"Do sleep!"

When *ar* occurs with the aorist, it expresses positive imperative only. But when it occurs with the imperfective morphology, it functions as a progressive or as an imperative particle[3].

[2]- Concerning the grammatical value of the particle *ar*, there are two hypotheses at least. On the one hand, it is argued that it is a realisation of the present tense (cf. Guerssel (1983), Makhad (1996). On the other hand, it is claimed that there is no morphological realisation of the present tense and that the particle is a purely aspectual morpheme (cf. Boukhris (1998), Omari (2001))

[3]- Unlike *li* in SA, notice that *ar* is not inflectional in the sense that it does not attach to the verb: the verb and *ar* can be separated by negative adverbs and clitics:
i/ Ar yadlli y-qra
Asp formerly he-study-imprf
"He used to study"
ii/ Ar- tn y- qra
Asp-them he-study-imprf
"He is reading them"
This suggests that *ar* has its own lexical entry and is specified for the categorial feature [+V] and the aspectual feature [+imprf]. The fact that it occurs in imperative constructions also suggests that it is specified for a [+imperative] feature. Following Boukhris (1998), we argue that the aspectual projection is headed by a null morpheme in the context of sentences with imperfective interpretation

Concerning the negative imperative, there is only one way to express it in SA. This consists of the so-called *prohibitive laa*.
54/ *laa*- ta- xruj- ø
Neg-you-go out-juss
"Don't go out"

However in Berber, negative imperative is expressed by the simple insertion of "*ad*" before the Neg element in a simple negative proposition
55/ ad *ur* t- gʷn-t
that Neg you-sleep(Aorist)
"do not sleep"

Notice that it is only the particle *ad* which changes the illocutionary force of the construction from a simple negative to an imperative negative.

Following Boukhris (1998) and Omari (2001), we assume that *ad* is a complementizer endowed with the feature [+C] in the lexicon, which fact entails that it is inserted under head Comp. When it enters numeration, it bears [+Wh] in interrogatives, and [+imperative] in negative imperatives.

Thus, if a comparison is to be made between positive imperative and negative imperative, then it must be carried out between the strategies that involve the merger of the particles with the verb, that is to say, between (52-b) and (54) for SA or between (53-b) and (55) for Berber.

What is interesting about this comparison is that the positive imperative and the negative imperative exhibit salient symmetric properties: first, both particles are in complementary distribution with the morphological verbal form that expresses the imperative.

56-a/ **li* - ʔuxruj- ø Standard Arabic
that go out- juss
b/ **laa* ʔuxruj- ø
Neg go out -juss

57-a/ *ad gʷn Berber
that sleep (imper)
b/ **ur* gʷn
Neg sleep(imper)

Second, both of them make use of a particle paired with an imperfective verbal form[4]. One argument in support of the

[4]- The imperfective verbal form found in imperative constructions normally denotes unaccomplished actions.

fact that they are paired with the imperfective not the imperative is the fact that this form can be paired with other Neg particles but without denoting any sense of prohibition.

Standard Arabic	Berber
58/ a/ *lam-* ta- xruj- ø	b/ *ur* t- g^{w}n-t
Neg-you-go out-juss	Neg you-sleep (Aorist)
"You did not go out"	"you did not sleep"

Notice that in (58), *lam* is paired with the same verbal form as in (54) and (55) but only in the latter does it express prohibition. This implies that the illocutionary force of command or prohibition in (54) and (55), respectively, are encoded in the particles not the verbal form.

Third, since the imperfective form is generally unmarked for tense[5], this means that both positive imperative and the negative imperative will also lack tense marking.

Forth, both the positive imperative particle *li-* and the negative imperative element *laa* in SA stipulate that the verb be marked with a jussive mood Inflection.

These symmetric properties clearly indicate that the syntax of positive imperative must be coherent with the one of the negative imperative. In other words, the process whereby (54) is derived must be parallel to the one involved in the derivation of (55). Likewise, the reason why (56-a) in SA and (57-a) in Berber crash must be the same as the one responsible for the non-convergence of (56-b) in SA and (57-b) in Berber. This is the subject matter of the following subsections.

3.2 Derivation of Positive Imperative

In order to explain the derivational process of the positive imperative, the following assumption is in order: an imperative construction is associated with an imperative feature. It is well known that the imperative is one of those features which determine the propositional content and the illocutionary force of the sentence. Thus following Chomsky (1995), it is plausible to assume that this feature is in Comp. Another piece of evidence supporting the generation of the imperative feature in C is provided by the complementary distribution of the imperative particle and the overt complementizer, as is illustrated by the following example:

59/ *Yajibu ?an li- ta- xruj- ø
must that for-you-go out-juss

Having laid down this background, let us now see how a construction such as (51-a) is derived. In (51-a) the imperative verb cyclically moves to C to check its imperative feature. The imperative verb movement to C is lent support by constructions such as (60)

60/ *Yajibu ?an ?uxruj- ø
must that go out-juss

In (60), the verb must move to C to check its imperative feature but since this position is already filled by an overt complementizer, the process is blocked and the sentence is ruled out, as the non-checked imperative feature will enter to PF level as an illegitimate object.

A second argument supporting the same idea is provided by the ill-formedness of these constructions

61/ *li- ?uxruj- ø
for go out-juss

In (61), there are two lexical items associated with two imperative features –namely "*li*" and the verb in the imperative form. These two lexical items are competing for one single position to check their features. However, since only one of them can have its feature checked, then the feature of the other remains unchecked. Hence the crashing of the derivation.

Finally, note that the imperative feature is considered to be strong in SA. This means that the movement of the verb to C is an operation carried out before Spell Out. The fact that the construction in (62) below is out clearly supports this idea[6]:

62-a/ *?anta ?uxruj
you go out

b/ ?uxruj ?anta
go out you!
"Go out !"

3.3. Derivation of Negative Imperative in SA and Berber

In this subsection, we will show that the analysis presented to account for the derivation of positive imperatives can be extended to account for the derivation of negative imperatives both in SA and Berber. Consider these constructions:

[5]- The imperfective form is unmarked for tense as it can have a timeless reference as in (i). And it can occur with temporal elements having past (ii) or future (iii) temporal reference.
(i)Al arDu taduuru
The-earth turns
(ii)Kaanat zaynabu tuRannii
Was zynab singing
"Zynab was singing"
(iii)Sa-nu- hariru bilaada-na
Will-we free country-our
"We will free our country"
Cf. Benmamoun (2000) for more details.

[6]- The construction in (62-a) may be acceptable with a pause after the subject:
(iii) ?anta, ?uxruj !
you, go out

63-a / *laa* ta- xruj- ø min huna Standard Arabic
Neg you-go out-juss from here
"Don't go out from here"

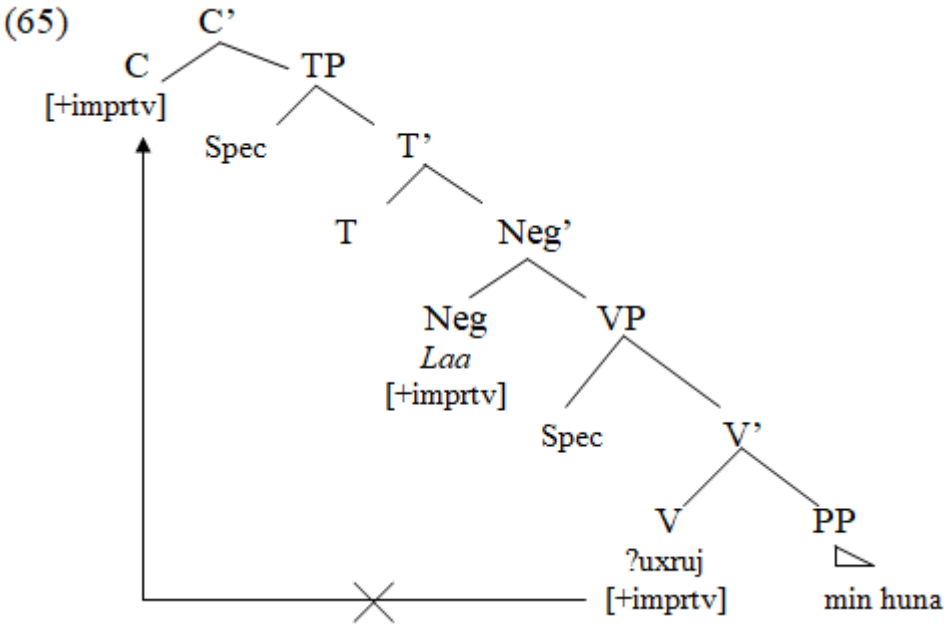
b/ **laa* ?u-xruj- ø min huna
Neg go out-juss from here
"Don't go out from here"

64-a/ ad *ur* t- g^w n-t Berber
that Neg sleep+Aorist.you(sing)
"do not sleep"

b/*ad *ur* g^w n
that Neg sleep+A.you(sing)
"sleep"

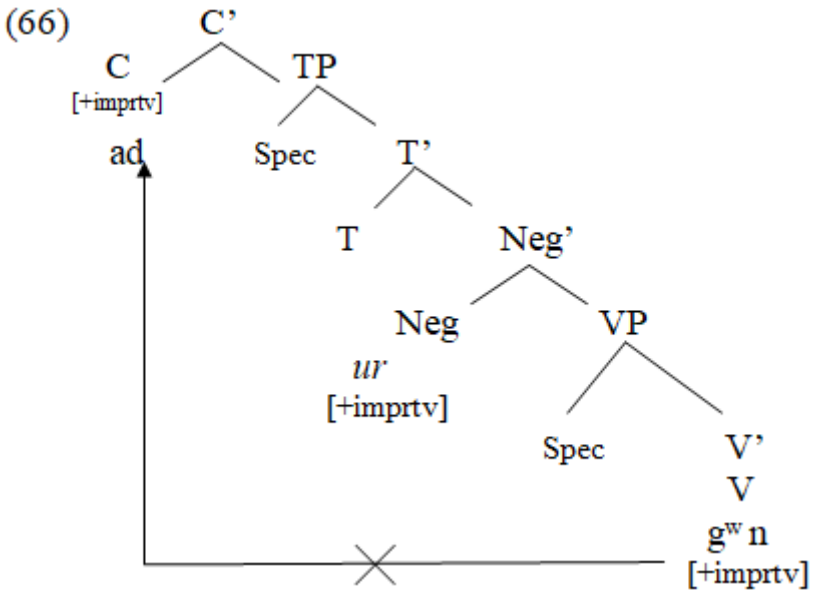
In (63-a) and (64-a), we assume that the verb cyclically moves through the relevant functional heads. The merger with Neg is motivated by the need to check the [+V, +imprf] of *laa* in (63-a) and [+V] of *ur* in (64-a). Since both sentences are generated in the prohibitive mood, then a further movement to C is still needed to check this feature. In these constructions, we assume that it is not the verb which carries the prohibition/negative imperative features, but it is the negative element in SA and the particle *ad* in Berber. One argument that this feature is checked in C is provided by constructions such as (63-b) and (64-b). The ungrammaticality of these constructions show that V-to-C movement cannot take place because of the negative particle *laa* in SA, as shown in (65) below:

(65)



In this representation, the Neg element prevents the verb from merging with the appropriate feature in C, as both the verb and *laa* have the [+imperative] feature in common. Adopting the same analysis, we can account for the non-convergence of the Berber construction in (66):

(66)



The Neg element *ur* prevents the verb from merging with the appropriate feature in C . Notice that this movement is impossible both in the Arabic example and in the Berber example even if the verb merges with the Neg element since this merger operation will result in two lexical elements associated with two similar features competing for one unique functional position, namely C.

4. Conclusion

In this paper, we considered the interaction of Negs with the imperative. The presented analysis has shown that the negative imperative is expressed by the prohibitive *laa* in conjunction with a verb in the imperfective form. This means that contra previous analyses there is salient symmetrical properties exhibited by the morphology of the imperative and the negative imperative, which necessitate a similar syntactic treatment.

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